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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 004554

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/09/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [AF](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: TURKS PLANNING FOR FEBRUARY

ASSUMPTION OF ISAF COMMAND, SEEK NATO FUNDING FOR DEPLOYMENT

REF: ANKARA 3618

Classified By: DCM Robert S. Deutsch for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[11](#). (C) On Aug. 10, PolMilOff called on Col. Halit Yilmaz, Chief of TGS's NATO Branch office, to discuss NATO issues, including Turkey's planning for the Istanbul High Readiness Force (HRF) to assume command of ISAF in February 2005. Yilmaz said that even absent a final NATO decision on the future of ISAF and thus also absent "political direction" from the Turkish civilian leadership, the Turkish military was proceeding with planning for the Turkish Army deployment as the HRF in February. Yilmaz added that Turkey wanted its successor in August 2005 to be formally lined up in advance, recalling that Turkey was pressed into two extra months as ISAF commander in 2002 while a replacement had to be found.

[12](#). (C) Given that Afghanistan's parliamentary elections are scheduled during Turkey's likely command, PolMilOff urged the GOT to consider deploying a "robust" presence, and inquired as to Turkey's plans thus far. Yilmaz responded that TGS had not yet decided whether to offer a Corps HQ, a Corps HQ plus one battalion, or a Corps HQ plus two battalions. He added that Turkey expected NATO collectively to pay Turkey's deployment costs, which he estimated to be US\$ 17 million for the HQ alone.

[13](#). (C) Comment: We had heard earlier from MFA that the NATO budget committee was considering Alliance policy on using NATO common funds to defray ISAF deployment costs. With Turkey just beginning to explore a new three-year IMF stand-by, the defense budget is likely to be as tight next year as it was this year, when the deployment of three Turkish helicopters to ISAF was held up for months as we searched for someone to pay for their transportation. We could easily go down this road again unless a funding source for the transportation cost of the Turkish deployment is found well in advance of Feb. 2005. If that is to be the GOT, we need to start working on Ankara soon. End comment.

[14](#). (U) Kabul minimize considered.

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